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ABSTRACT

A practicum was developed to empower pre-service teachers to become more confident in their attempts to motivate and encourage young children to write. Emphasis was placed on the use of holistic philosophies relating to writing, in contrast to more conventional methodologies. Student participants included junior teacher candidates enrolled in primary grade level reading methods courses and senior special education student teachers. Collaboration between course instructors was required. The practicum writer administered pre/post surveys and questionnaires related to familiarity with holistic writing strategies and which enabled students to reflect on attitudes about writing; required students to prepare and teach lessons which incorporate journal writing, invented spelling, book-making, and self-selected activities; created a special needs/instructional adaptation section on lesson plans; observed methods students and special education student teachers in fieldwork; arranged oral presentations for students to partake in cooperative efforts; and prepared a handbook of writing ideas to be used as a course supplement. Results indicated that teacher candidates demonstrated ability to reflect on past attitudes about writing in order to develop changes in classroom practices. Post-surveys/questionnaires revealed a substantial increase in familiarity with holistic writing strategies and an increased awareness of the needs of the exceptional child. Data indicated a positive carry-over of concepts from junior level reading methods courses to senior level student teaching seminars. (One figure of data is included; survey instruments, the lesson plan format, evaluation forms, and a handbook entry form are attached. Contains 83 references.) (Author/RS)

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ED 362 902

Cultivating Writing in the Primary Grades by Developing Holistic and Reflective Teaching Strategies for Pre-Service Teachers

- by -

Jill Levin

Cluster 45

A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Jill Levin under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Sept. 21, 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

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Sincere thanks to all my dear friends and colleagues, for their support was what gave me strength;... With love and tears to my parents whose spirits feel the excitement of what I know they would feel if they were here... I dedicate this major practicum to them.

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ABSTRACT

Cultivating Writing in the Primary Grades by Developing Holistic and Reflective Teaching Strategies for Pre-Service Teachers. Levin, Jill., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies. Pre-Service Teacher Education/Teaching Methods/Primary Education/Writing Attitudes/Writing Readiness/ Writing Instruction/Creative Writing/Journal Writing/Dialogue Journals/Invented Spelling/Whole Language

This practicum was developed to empower pre-service teachers to become more confident in their attempts to motivate and encourage young children to write. Considerable emphasis was directly pointed toward the use of holistic philosophies relating to writing which is in contrast to more conventional methodologies. Student participants included junior teacher candidates enrolled in primary grade level reading methods courses and senior special education student teachers. Collaboration between course instructors was required.

The writer administered pre/post surveys and questionnaires related to familiarity with holistic writing strategies and which enabled students to reflect on attitudes about writing; required students to prepare and teach lessons which incorporate journal writing, invented spelling, book-making and self-selected activities; created a special needs/instructional adaptation section on lesson plans; observed methods students and special education student teachers in fieldwork; arranged oral presentations for students to partake in cooperative efforts; and prepared a handbook of writing ideas for the Department to be used as a course supplement.

Results of the practicum indicated that teacher candidates demonstrated ability to reflect on past attitudes about writing in order to develop changes in classroom practices. Post surveys/questionnaires revealed a substantial increase in familiarity with holistic writing strategies and an increased awareness into the needs of the exceptional child. Data indicated a positive carry-over of concepts from junior level reading methods courses to senior level student teaching seminars.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting for this practicum was a four year undergraduate liberal arts college. The college provides a strong academic and value-oriented private education which is characterized by the motto, "Esse non videri" - To be and not to seem. Its diverse population of students vary in age and background and live within commuting distance of the campus. The college is located in a residential, suburban area and its 25 acre lake-side campus provides the intimacy of a small college, yet the advantages of many nearby cultural and recreational facilities.

The Division of General Studies has attracted non-traditional adult students, and adult professionals to its many career-oriented academic programs. Furthermore, the Division of Arts and Sciences, in addition to providing many degree programs, enables those adults who had attained an Associate Degree at a two-year community college or those who had interrupted their college careers, to complete a Bachelor's Degree program. The majority of students who attend the college work full or part-time to meet tuition costs.

'Bridge Programs' involve high school seniors in college

level courses, while senior citizens are invited to audit courses of their choice. The Repertory Theatre is an integral part of the development of the college and serves as a performance source for local theatre productions. The recent construction of a modern 25,000 square foot free-standing library, which includes its own curriculum library, offers an integrated approach to complete automation of library services.

The students involved in this practicum were majoring in Child Study and will be certified in elementary education or dually certified in elementary and special education. They were Junior level primary grade reading methods students, and Senior level special education student teachers. The Child Study teacher education programs are liberal arts oriented, with an emphasis on promoting a child development approach toward children, and foster relative curriculum and methodologies.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is an Assistant Professor in the Child Study Department, which is in the Division of Arts and Sciences at the college. She teaches Junior and Senior level students enrolled in the elementary or dual certification degree programs. Her responsibilities include teaching curriculum and methods courses in special education and primary grade reading instruction (K-3). Furthermore, she is a supervisor of student teachers during their Senior Seminar in Special Education Student Teaching.

In addition, she observes and supervises reading methods students in the field. The writer's background in special education and early childhood has enabled her to be particularly aware of the importance of early literacy for the diverse population of children in our schools today.

The writer is a department Faculty Advisor and counsels students regularly in her office. She is a member of the Recommendations Committee which reviews the progress of each student majoring in Child Study to monitor academic progress and suitability for the teaching profession. The writer takes an active role in the Academic Development Committee (ADC), which evaluates students in the college with indexes below 2.0. She personally advises some of these students for a stated period of time, thus giving them a chance to succeed.

The writer also serves as Moderator for the Child Study Club. This student-run college sponsored group is an active fund-raising organization which provides support for children in need. Their Winter Holiday Fair and Spring Fun Day are popular events initiated by the students and geared to the interests of children in the community, and field placement classrooms. Working with the club in this capacity affords the writer opportunity to interact with students in a casual, spontaneous setting, which enables her to more fully appreciate students' development as a whole.

For the purposes of this practicum, the writer concentrated on involving those students enrolled in the primary grade reading

methods courses entitled, Reading and Language Arts: Primary Grades, and those students enrolled in the special education student teaching seminar entitled, Special Education Practicum. In addition to her own sections, the writer collaborated with other instructors who taught these courses, so that a majority of primary reading methods students and all special education student teachers were represented.

In an effort to promote and support changes in teaching practices, the writer endeavored to prepare students for the responsibility of a teaching profession. Only those students who have made the decision to always be learners can be open to adaptations and change. Effective teaching can best be acquired when students develop the attitudes necessary to enhance learning. This writer appreciates the human development process itself, and is committed to the task of providing teacher education which will empower students to understand and truly care for young children.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

It had become apparent to the writer that students who were preparing to teach primary grade children to write did not know how to get started, nor did they equate written expression as an enjoyable, worthwhile endeavor. Despite the fact that writing was stressed in every Child Study course, the writer was distressed that students remained unmotivated and frequently felt defeated when asked to write. The problem was that teacher candidates who often had experienced a considerable amount of frustration with past writing tasks had difficulty cultivating writing in their fieldwork classrooms. The 'writing problem' for many children stems from the fact that teachers themselves are not motivated. Pre-service teachers must assimilate their own priorities to create writing environments which will help children to flourish.

The processes of writing and learning are powerfully linked. Writing is basic to thinking about knowledge in all fields and communicating that knowledge. This writer was frustrated by the tendency of most of her students who were only minimally interested in personally engaging the primary child in the world of beginning literacy through writing. The more

children have the opportunity to write, and write about what really matters to them, the greater their chances of growing into able thinkers.

To a considerable degree, the success of the writer's teacher education efforts are attributed to the overall philosophy of the department, which considers the whole child from all aspects of development and understanding the interrelationship of all these areas. Whole language, theories and research into reading, writing process and the development of early literacy are at the heart of primary reading methods courses, and infused into the special education methods and seminars. Yet, the writer was continually disheartened by the fact that students enrolled in these courses lacked the confidence and were uncertain of how to stop using traditional skill-oriented, phonics-based, basal-centered reading and writing approaches. It was obvious from the start of this practicum that the writer's students felt most comfortable continuing the trend of how they were taught to write. Indeed, most students did not even equate writing with emergent literacy! Therefore, this writer was dealing with more than just new methods of cultivating writing in the primary classroom; she was negotiating fundamental change.

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of encouraging teacher candidates to take an active role in nurturing writing in the primary grades of both the typical and the special education setting. If most prospective teachers have experienced

only traditional teaching practices from kindergarten on, then the prospect of helping children become writers in ways more compatible with their natural approach to language learning is formitable challenge for them, as well as for this writer.

Writing is an active task that involves children in their own learning. The emphasis of holistic teaching is on meaningful involvement in writing because of its relevance to the child. Vulkelich (1992), states "all children, particularly children who demonstrate little knowledge of written language functions, need opportunities to develop these understandings before and while they are acquiring decoding and encoding strategies" (p. 204). Less reliance on instructional materials involving isolated skills, and more focus on a sound process writing program is fundamental if pre-service teachers are to develop more positive attitudes toward writing and encourage their primary children to become writers.

Thomas and Rinehart (1990), believe that "children are willing authors when given the opportunity to see themselves as writers" (p. 23). The problem that teacher candidates do not equate written expression with positive or worthwhile activities affects this writer deeply. According to Brazee and Kristo (1986), "most of these students admit to fears about writing stemming from elementary teachers who concen-

trated only on perfection in spelling to high school teachers who stressed grammar over content" (p. 423). It had become quite apparent that these past pressures of learning to write continued into the writer's college classroom. Motivating prospective teachers to cultivate writing in the primary grades meant more than improving attitudes toward writing. It meant a concentrated effort on the part of the writer to empower her students to become active participants in their own professional development.

Problem Documentation

Evidence that supported the existence of the problem included a college-wide department survey, Department Policy Guidelines, Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms and college supervisor observation reports, a Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers and student writing samples.

During the Spring 1991 semester, the college faculty, as a whole, took part in its second 'Planning Day' of the academic year 1990-1991. The initial focus of the day was to evaluate student competencies engendered by the core curriculum. As a result of this 'meeting of the minds,' the Assessment Program Development Committee (APDC) was formed to conduct a college-wide department survey which would target student competencies in nine areas. Of the nine competencies listed, written expression skills were included in the 'essential skills' component.

Of the 19 department forms distributed, 17 were returned and collated. Results indicated that 15 of the 17 departments strongly agreed that students' written expression skills needed improvement. Additional faculty comments included in the survey indicated that 12 of the 17 departments represented gave further support and meaning to writing as a comprehensive part of a liberal arts education. Thus, the contention of the Child Study Department that ability to communicate through writing is essential to teaching, was fortified.

To promote students' growth in written communication skills and their sensitivity to its importance, the Child Study Department Policy Guidelines mandate that no student shall receive an A or A- on work that lacks organization, clarity and contains numerous syntax errors. As a result of these Guidelines, of the 104 students in this writer's reading methods courses during the 1991-1992 academic year, only 13 students received an A or A- as a final grade. Grades in Child Study courses should reflect students' ability to communicate both verbally and through written expression, among other things. In many instances, lack of ability to communicate may be an indication of poor grasp of content. The written expression demonstrated by the majority of students in the writer's methods courses throughout 1991-1992, had been of major concern to her. Although the Department

Policy Guidelines mandate that unsatisfactory writing ability be reflected in final grades, and final grades clearly demonstrated evidence of the problem, the writer remained dismayed over the obvious uneasiness with which her students approached written assignments, in general.

In order to more fully evaluate all teacher candidates, students are observed at least once during their Junior level reading methods courses and two or three times in their special education student teaching seminars. Junior level methods students are expected to plan, teach and evaluate lessons which they implement with groups or to the entire class, during the one morning a week that is required for their fieldwork. This prerequisite to full-time Senior student teaching affords on-going assessment for all field-related courses. After observing 43 of her methods students during the Spring 1992 semester, the writer noted that 30 of the 43 students relied heavily on ditto writing work, rather than writing workshop activities. Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms received at the end of the Spring 1992 semester, supported evidence of the problem and confirmed the writer's findings, through descriptions of lessons, that only 13 of 43 students observed, used more integrated approaches to writing in their primary grade classrooms.

At the start of the Fall 1992 semester, the writer distributed a Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers

(Appendix A), in four of the six primary reading methods courses to determine familiarity with holistic writing activities/opportunities that could be fostered in the primary grades. Of the 87 students surveyed, 79 did not know what was meant by the writing process and 76 did not understand how the concept of authorship related to primary children. Eighty students were unfamiliar with journal writing or the variety of types of journals. Of the 87 students surveyed, 49 were dual certification majors and 38 were elementary majors. Yet, 65 of the 87 students did not know what was meant by 'instructional adaptation' in terms of fostering writing into their classroom. According to Hatch (1992), "much has been learned about alternative ways of organizing and presenting language instruction for primary-aged children" (p. 54), but it appears that teachers tend not to adopt unfamiliar instructional strategies with which their success is uncertain. The writer feels that this is particularly true in the special education setting, where structure and tradition remain transfixed.

For some learners, spelling and handwriting issues last a lifetime. Graves (1982), pointed out that "problem solving and development do not lead to 'packages' of attack where children first master spelling, then handwriting... before writing" (p. 179). Familiarity with holistic writing activities put conventions behind a beginning writer, with atten-

tion to skills occurring within the context of what the child has written. Searcy (1988), pointed out that teachers who directly teach young children isolated skills do not provide opportunities for children to gain control over their writing. This is especially true for special needs children, who are easily frustrated due to learning or developmental disabilities.

During the Fall 1992 semester, the writer collected writing samples from 67 students enrolled in three primary reading methods courses. Samples were collected to determine how students felt about writing, and whether they remembered how they were taught to write. Of the 67 students surveyed, 25 indicated that they enjoyed writing and often write their own stories, poems, etc. The remaining 42 students related negative feelings toward writing and said they have 'no time' to write and only write when required to do so. In addition, at least half of the 67 students indicated that they remembered 'learning to write' through the use of penmanship books, alphabet memorization, dittoes with dots to follow and copying daily short paragraphs/stories from the board. Dyson (1985), stated that children cannot and will not become enthusiastic writers, if their writing experiences consist of dutifully copying from the blackboard. Unfortunately, many teachers see copying as a precursor to independent writing.

Hubbard (1988), felt that "learners of any age can lead the way if we will only actively listen to them" (p.38). It was interesting to note that only one student taking the survey, connected 'interest' to writing. Two students commented that since they had been placed in kindergarten classes, they did not feel writing would be an integral part of their daily activities. On the contrary, this writer agrees with Beemer and Grippando (1992), who state that "if the roots of writing instruction are planted firmly in kindergarten, students will blossom into skillful writers... like piano playing or painting, writing is a skill that improves with practice" (p. 36).

What teacher candidates needed to understand was that in classrooms that emphasize the writing process, there is allowance for individuality. Choosing topics, making decisions about length, style and spelling enables young writers to reveal their distinct personalities. Documentation of the problem clearly indicated the need for teacher candidates to provide the kinds of environments that cultivate writing and help primary children develop their language abilities as they learn.

Causative Analysis

The writer maintains that there were several causes of the problem. Pre-service teachers who did not enjoy

writing or consider it worthwhile, were unable to identify with the importance of the development of written expression in young children. The writer was increasingly concerned over students who approached writing assignments with a fair amount of trepidation. Although she had continually offered to clarify assignments for those in need, a majority of students insisted that they "can't write" or had "never been able to write," thereby exhibiting an almost defeatist attitude. The writer was aware that more than half of her students were transfer students, most of whom had completed a two year degree program. Overall, the college and Department requirements, as compared to what these students had been used to, were quite difficult for some to adjust to. In addition, most students were 'grade oriented,' in general, with little regard to the implications of how their attitudes toward writing might influence the children in their future classrooms.

This situation was directly connected to another cause of the problem. Teacher candidates had insufficient conceptual understanding of holistic teaching strategies that can facilitate the incorporation of writing into the primary grade classroom. As future teachers, the writer had found that most of her students adhere to strict standards and generally associate a phonic or skills conceptual understanding of the reading/writing process. Instruction in grammar, punc-

tuation and spelling were accepted as a 'must,' for most students had grown up with these areas emphasized throughout their school careers. The writer had noted how some of these practices had taken a toll on prospective teachers, as they tended to remain with what is familiar and with what had 'worked' in the past.

According to Isenberg (1990), when teachers become more aware of their actions in the classroom, a connection between implicit and explicit strategy can be associated with classroom practice. It is difficult for students to comprehend that skill work at the expense of real writing does not provide young children with the foundation or the motivation to learn to write well. The writer found this attitude expecially prevalent in her special education courses, for overall, her student teachers lacked the understanding that whole language instruction had many of the features of the individualized instruction needed for exceptional children...one-on-one, child-teacher interaction.

This lead to another cause of the problem in that students in primary grade field placements were reluctant to initiate original lessons and tended to follow prescribed directions. Most of the writer's students were intimidated by the prospect of taking on the new role of 'teacher' and were quite satisfied with being told what to do.

Yet another cause of the problem related to the fact that cooperating teachers often did not infuse meahingful writing

into their classrooms, therefore, teacher candidates had poor role models in the field. Strickland and Morrow (1989), found that despite the fact that teachers are beginning to acknowledge the notion of holistic perspectives, nonetheless, they voice concern that this approach may neglect the development of competent writers and readers. Language arts texts, workbooks and worksheets commonly seen in the primary grades today, encourage all children to conform and write in much the same way. Traditional classroom writing activities often make children doubt their abilities and dislike writing.

This related to another cause of the problem. On the whole, students were skeptical and unfamiliar with whole language and the strategies which solidify children's initial enthusiasm for written expression. Roop (1990), aptly states that "learning to write, and to write well, is necessary to keep the ogres of ignorance at bay" (p. 281). Writing is a complex task. However, when the writing process is emphasized, and children are allowed to invent their own spellings, use journals,choose or create their own books, prospective teachers can empower children to use all their cognitive and linguistic abilities.

This generated a final contributing cause of the problem. Most pre-service elementary and special education teachers have never had the opportunity to use activities such as journal writing in their coursework. It is difficult, if not impossible to

expect teacher candidates to cultivate writing by developing holistic and reflective teaching strategies, based on the fact that their field placement, as well as their college courses, continue to operate from old models. Therefore, the problem that pre-service teachers preparing to teach primary grade children to write did not know how to get started, nor did they equate writing with enjoyment or worthwhile endeavors, remained a challenge for this writer.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The writer found that a review of the literature confirmed the fact that pre-service teachers who were preparing to teach primary grade children to write, did not view written expression as valuable effort. The literature revealed that writing can be introduced and cultivated at an early stage, as a natural part of developing the language process, if it is coupled with a teacher who shares her excitement and enthusiasm for communicating through writing.

The preliminary literature review as discussed by Dobson (1985), Houck (1988) and Hayes (1990), supported the premise that teachers must view writing as a worthwhile and enriching endeavor in order to motivate children to think of themselves as writers. Houck (1988), stated that teacher candidates often demonstrate extensive negative feelings toward writing tasks and relates these feelings to how they were taught in the past.

She further emphasized that enhancing students' attitudes toward writing "requires considerable finesse" (p. 489). Dobson (1985), and Hayes (1990), emphasized that when teachers do not interfere with young children's attempts to write by expecting them to spell, punctuate and capitalize letters correctly from the outset, they will be encouraged to write more. It was further suggested that children will naturally progress "if they are provided the time, materials, information and freedom needed to manipulate and invent meaningful language" (Hayes, 1990, p. 62).

The writer agreed with the authors that students who did not enjoy writing cannot be appropriate role models for emergent writers. Beginning in kindergarten, children can be capable of composing stories in 'writing workshops' and learning to read from their writing and from shared reading of their own stories, as well as literature. The writer anticipated that in order to encourage her students to transform writing instruction in the classroom, she must be prepared to provide the same supportive environment in their course work that would be needed in their fieldwork.

Literature review of the research connected an underlying principle that improved attitudes towards writing involved time to reflect about language and learning. Stover and Vocke (1992), contended that prospective tea-

chers must develop a more positive disposition toward what it means to teach, and be guided to reflect and learn from their own experiences. Reflection requires that a teacher be able to look back on her own teaching and evaluate its consequences. This will enable the teacher to become more aware of whether her intentions in the classroom are consistent with her outcomes.

It is interesting to note that Short and Burke (1989), maintained that through reflective involvement in using both informal and formal writing for a wide variety of functional purposes, teacher candidates can distance themselves from their immediate problems. In this way, students will be more apt to appreciate the value of writing as a heuristic and, therefore, will use writing as a teaching/learning tool in their fieldwork, as well as in their own future classrooms.

In order to enhance the understanding that writing and reading go hand in hand, teacher candidates must be able to assimilate both as crucial to a child's success in school and other aspects of his life. In the writer's opinion, prospective teachers who are reluctant to move beyond the familiar or the traditional models of instruction will ultimately stagnate as professionals. Canning (1991), claimed that students are almost always resistant about change and reflection, but writing while reflecting allows them to solve problems and react to critical issues affecting reading and writing education today.

For instance, pre-service teachers who are able to value the reflective process will be more flexible in classroom practices. The ability to write is deeply connected to the ability to think and to reason well. Writing fosters and reinforces the skill of reading, and "since children read back what they've written... two skills for the price of one!" (Stone, 1991, p. 103).

Smith (1982), emphasized that teachers play a major role in helping children to become enthusiastic writers or reluctant writers. This writer fully agreed, for her students needed to become more aware that they can foster children's love for writing through their own originality and creativity. Writing need not be contingent on any one approach. Students placed in field situations need simply to capitalize on these situations to open up new awareness of thought and expression for children. This involved an active effort on the part of the writer to enable her students to do this by experiencing writing, reflecting on it and not being afraid of it.

Killion and Tednem (1991), described reflection as a guide for future action and stressed that reflective writing encourages the pre-service teacher to focus on the teaching/ learning process in both the college classroom, and in the primary grades. Reflective practice helps the prospective teacher through a cycle of thoughts and actions based on experiences. Hennings (1992), took this a step further and

detailed advantages and procedures for using dialogue journals for teacher candidates to help them reflect, through free writing, on their problems and concerns. The writer tended to agree, for she felt that most of her students' loss of writing spontaneity was the result of past activities that were associated with a perceived "inability to achieve certain extrinsic standards" (Smith, 1982, p. 17). The most often cited advantage of dialogue journal writing included helping students become more relaxed as writers. In this way, they become comfortable with writing. Furthermore, by incorporating this type of reflection, teacher candidates are more likely to use this kind of journal in their teaching and become more aware of what they have seen and what they have done in the field.

Literature review of the research connected teaching and helping children develop successful beginning writing by reviewing emergent literacy as interconnecting parts of a whole. Mavrogenes (1986), suggested that by avoiding traditional writing instruction, children learn to like writing and to consider it an everyday activity. The writer was well aware of the fact that writing which involves self-selected topics and quality classroom time was often not practiced in the primary grades. Many of her students equated writing with filling in blanks on a ditto sheet or circling words and letters. Unfortunately, many classrooms which served as field placements, concentrated

on these mechanical tasks. Neat penmanship was often rewarded, with little regard for personal meaning or interest on the part of the child. In view of the more recent research on emergent literacy, Franklin (1992), contended that teachers need to provide young children with the foundation or the motivation to write and to use written language to integrate reading and language skills. Literacy practices that focus on isolated skills do not provide this foundation, whereas children who are allowed to participate actively in their reading and writing actually "teach themselves about the forms, functions and conventions of print" (p. 45).

The premise that children must become proficient readers to be successful in learning to write appears to be incorrect. The introduction of writing has often been delayed until children have learned much about reading. This delay is based on the notion that reading is indeed prerequisite to writing. The writer had noted that those students who were placed in kindergartens often felt that the 'task' of integrating writing into their classrooms would be insurmountable. Yet, most young children eagerly exhibit interest in writing, and when given the opportunity, reflect their understanding of many important concepts or conventions used in our writing system. For example, the younger child most often demonstrates her concept of directionality by 'scribbling' from left to right. According to Shanahan (1988), when children have little or no

opportunity for writing, the amount of overlap between reading and writing is diminished.

Jenson and Roser (1990), supported a holistic pre-service teacher experience that involved the act of writing. Only then can students understand that in order for children to write, they must read. Furthermore, in order to learn from reading or respond to reading, one often writes. Roop (1990), supported the contention that 'non-writing' teachers must re-think their educational approach to incorporating writing, for children can and do become accomplished authors if provided the guidance, and if treated as writers. Young children are very imaginative and teachers should be able to provide varied experiences to continue the growth of their imaginations through writing.

Writing need not be acquired from a classroom time table labeled "Writing.' Instead, writing comes from open-ended experiences which have meaning for children. According to Marlow (1987), writing involves "discovery and learning, the life of the classroom... two items that encompass what school should be at its best... items that have the capacity for generating innumerable experiences" (p. 3).

The writer felt that her students needed to view writing as a means of representing ideas that can be considered and examined. It is a way to analyze thinking and understand

what is done in a classroom. There is even increased claim that writing plays a crucial role in developing abstract or higher level thinking skills. Rosaen (1990), claimed that teacher candidates need to create better writing opportunities to replace unproductive writing assignments that limit children's ability to think. It appears that the emphasis of writing in a good number of classrooms today focus on producing a correct written form. Yet, this very emphasis can interfere with a child's ability to explore their ideas through writing. Children should be assisted in learning about the multiple demands of a writing task, by being given the freedom to risk using writing as a tool rather than merely to produce a written product.

Gunderson and Shapiro (1988), emphasized that the teacher's approach to writing in the primary grades can result in the rapid learning of more mature forms of writing. Children's writing often appears to progress through developmental stages from scribbling with meaning, to writing initial consonants to represent words beginning with a particular sound, to a more conventional type spelling and writing. It is the writer's opinion that if classrooms have writing-rich environments, many of these stages are even skipped or unobserved, because of rapid development of skills. Children's ways of writing change as they begin to sense the functional possibilities in their activity. Teacher candidates need to

develop these possibilities, by helping children sense what can be accomplished through writing and respond to their efforts.

Juliebo and Edwards (1988), claimed that teachers must foster the ability to write for many purposes and an intended audience creates a meaningful writing experience. "Indeed, in whole societies, literacy finds a permanent and prominent niche when the information conveyed through written language becomes part of the social network... when people talk about written materials and when those materials can affect their views of themselves and their participation in the world" (Dyson, 1989, p. 12). The writer is aware that often when children are 'taught' to write in school, the writing task is presented in isolation and without real audience or purpose for the children. It was, therefore, critical to her that prospective teachers be made aware of the importance of this sense of audience. Overall, studies appear to stress the need for "choice of topic, a sense of purpose and a varied audience" (Juliebo & Edwards, 1989, p. 22). If given the opportunity, writing can fulfill a child's need to communicate ideas and knowledge with others.

Literature review of the research has connected invented spelling to the enhancement of written communication skills. According to Phinney (1987), invented spelling breaks with tradition... no writing until children can spell. The writer

agrees that we must accept approximations of standard spelling until the standard is learned. If not, children will seldom write, except for workbook exercises, until the upper grades. "Writing has become too important for us to waste precious time waiting for our writers to first become perfect spellers" (p. 4). Pre-service teachers need to be aware that invented spelling is akin to problem-solving skills, whereas standard spelling can be considered rote memory skills.

Writing most frequently begins in kindergarten (often before) when symbols, letters or words appear within a large colorful drawing. It continues into first grade with an increase in the number of phonetic spellings. By second grade, children can fill pages with feelings and details. The physical act of writing is easier as fine-motor movements improve. By the third grade, children deliberately begin to add and change parts of their writing and become more aware of correctness (Fiderer, 1986). Learning to write involves experimentation and risk-taking. According to Griffith, Klesius and Kromrey (1992), children who use invented spelling in whole language classrooms write more words, use more unique words in their compositions, and seem less concerned about spelling words correctly than children in traditional classroom situations. "Real rewards await the child who writes fearlessly about a FROSHUS DOBRMAN PENSR instead of a BAD DOG" (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991, p. 137).

Changes in perspective, attitude and responsibility are needed in order for teacher candidates to value the writing efforts of primary children. Through conferences and writing workshop activities, children learn to participate in their own writing evaluations. Pils (1991), claimed that "children do not need to stop their reading or writing to be evaluated. Their reading and writing is the evaluation; it is not a separate phenomenon" (p. 50). Advocates of invented spelling agree that children's errors are part of their effort to build a coherent system of writing. Children are then able to modify their previous ideas, rather than just accumulate new bits of information from the outside. According to Wood (1982), invented spelling has been slowly drawn into the mainstream of language research, with increasing attention to the interrelatedness of reading and writing.

Richels (1987), maintained that the teacher encourage children to try writing during play, at drawing tables or at writing centers, for it is important that invented spelling be used in all of its stages. Although invented spelling can be considered phonic oriented in many ways, the problem of most phonic instruction is that it occurs in isolation, without the contexts and purposes which would make it meaningful. Children need to know that writing is more than just spelling. Using the natural language drive which most children bring to school to develop literacy is not a new concept.

Ideas such as the language experience approach and invented spelling have been addressed extensively in educational research (Coate & Castle, 1989). The writer believed that her students must observe the 'give and take' occurrences that take place as children invent spellings. As Kamii and Randazzo (1985) pointed out, invented spelling can serve as a means of not only improving writing, but developing other language skills. According to DiStefano and Hagerty (1985), invented spelling should be encouraged in the primary grades so that children can write frequently to convey meaning to themselves, their peers or their teacher. Thus, children who are supported in their efforts to express themselves freely will be more apt to become "ardent writers, adventurous in their ideas and in their use of words" (Lehr, 1986, p. 454).

The writer was continually frustrated over the fact that despite recent research about children's invented spelling, spelling curriculum and writing has not changed for the most part in many of the schools which served as field placements for her students. Obviously, spelling was only a small part of what should be a rich curriculum in language and literature. Wilde (1990), summed it up well in that the use of invented spelling can help both teachers and children, for in fact, learning to spell can "be part of learning about language for its own sake... ultimately as effortless and as

pleasant as learning to speak" (p. 287).

Literature review of the research connected journal writing with cultivating writing in the primary grades. Kintisch (1986), contended that journal writing in the primary grades produces eager writers who experiment with different styles of writing. It was further suggested that valuing journal writing in education generates dramatic changes in the theories of learning to write through interactive thinking and doing processes (Zacharias, 1991). Through journal writing, children know that the words on the paper are their words. These words can be enjoyed with the whole group, or reserved for a 'buddy' or shared with the teacher alone. Valuing a personal process such as journal writing incorporates fundamental changes in the purposes of writing. No longer can the teacher be seen as "filling the empty heads of students" (p. 265).

Hipple (1985), believed that kindergarten children can write and that they should be given the opportunity to engage in journal writing as one particular writing activity. The writer agrees with the author, for in order for journal writing to be successful, children need to view themselves as writers. This was an essential aspect of what the writer saw as a major component of the problem. For, in order to nurture or instill a love for writing in children, her students needed to connect their own writing with being writers. Journal writing

can, therefore, serve several funtions. It can help children develop a sense of authorship; it is open to free choice of topics; it can help communicate ideas, and most importantly, it can serve as a means to communicate feelings.

Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987), agreed that first graders enjoy journal writing and gain confidence in their ability to use written language. Regardless of the level of their writing development, children can be encouraged to write with confidence. Graves (1983), often described the wide variety of choices in selecting journal entries. Selecting their own topics, which can involve the simple retelling of stories to personal experiences accounts for overall gains in using written language at the primary level.

Calkins (1986), demonstrated that children are more interested in journal writing when their teacher writes back to them. Thus, a dialogue journal has been defined as "written conversation between two persons on a functional, continued basis, about topics of individual and even mutual interest" (Bode, 1989, p. 568). The advantages of a dialogue journal relate well to a holistic philosophy of education. It enables children to be empowered to think critically and to express their thoughts to the teacher in an appropriate, positive way. In a sense, the dialogue journal allows for

the possibility of mutual learning,a far cry from the more traditional approach of transferring knowledge.

Bromley (1989), discussed an outgrowth of the dialogue journal called the buddy journal. The buddy journal is a "diary that a pair of students keep together in which they write back and forth to each other, conversing in writing" (p. 123). These journals incorporate some of the natural aspects of oral language, for they are interactive. Children must read entries in order to make responses. When children see that the teacher values an activity, the activity often gains added status. Buddy journals frequently enables more capable writers to model for less able writers. Quite naturally, they provide the audience needed to give children reasons to write clearly and coherently.

Sharing writing, through journal writing also focuses on authorship, which is a key component of a holistic teaching philosophy. Conferring with others helps children use each other as an audience. According to Lamme (1989), emergent literacy involves opportunity for children to think of themselves as authors and to become more aware of what authorship means. "Authors writing to authors is one activity that thoroughly integrates the reading-writing process" (p. 705). When children actually visit other classrooms and read stories that they have written, a powerful contribution has been

made toward future development of positive attitudes towards writing.

Since more that half of this writer's students were dual certification majors and teacher candidates who must be prepared to meet the needs of a diversity of children, the literature review of the research that connects writing and children with disabilities was especially interesting to her. Since the passage of the Education For All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Public Law 94-142), it would seem that prospective elementary teachers need to be prepared to educate mainstreamed children with disabilities. In general, however, the writer feels that more interdisciplinary training at the pre-service level be made to help to improve collaboration between future elementary and special educators. Kearney and Durand (1992), believe that "interface between general and special education is one of the most important and pressing issues facing educators in the 1990's" (p. 6).

The ability to communicate through written language is important in our society. Yet, young children with learning disabilities, for example, often consider themselves non-writers. Stoddard (1987), pointed out that most often the mechanics of spelling, punctuation and syntax are emphasized for the special needs child, with resultant writing skills reported as consistently inadequate. Therefore, Salvage and Brazee (1991),

contended that since a paradigm shift to whole language is occurring in elementary education, the holistic teaching of reading and writing must now be implemented more for exceptional children, if they, too, are to be successful writers. Encouraging special needs children to write by engaging in the writing process will ultimately improve their organizational skills. The writer can see a connection between her teacher candidates who were reluctant cultivators of writing in their classrooms and the young special needs children in those classrooms. Encouraging these children to "become risk-takers and to overcome the risks they face in a skills-in-isolation approach to learning and teaching" (p. 356).

Grant, Lazarus and Peyton (1992), believed that the exchange of dialogue journals is an effective way to foster communication between exceptional children and their teachers, and helps to improve fluency and ease of writing. In addition, Gaustad and Messenheimer-Young (1991), supported this premise and felt there was less frustration if children can write about things they know through the dialogue journal procedure. When classroom writing lacks purpose or audience, young children do not reap its benefits. For children with mild disabilities, these types of meaningless writing tasks will be exasperating, if not impossible. Journal writing affords children with special needs the opportunity to trust their own thinking and

build confidence to express ideas. One of the most valuable qualities of the journal is that it is tailored to each child's needs. According to Wollman-Bonilla (1989), by writing and receiving supportive feedback, children with mild disabilities recognize that their personal responses are valued. This contrasts drastically with a fear of being wrong, which can result in negative behaviors.

In order to compensate for their learning problems, primary grade children can easily learn to avoid writing. Rather than risk failure, these children simply give up. Pre-service teachers need to become keenly aware of this possibility. Mather and Lachowicz (1992), stated that if children with disabilities can write through the use of a variety of journals and self-selected topics, in addition to sharing writing with non-disabled peers, the result would be positive increases in self-esteem and the ability to view themselves as writers.

> "Are you sure Leo's a bloomer?" asked Leo's father. "Patience," said Leo's mother. "A watched bloomer doesn't bloom." So Leo's father watched television instead of Leo... Then one day, in his own good time, Leo bloomed! He could read! He could write! He also spoke. And it wasn't just a word. It was a whole sentence. And that sentence was... "I MADE

IT" (From Leo the Late Bloomer, Kraus, 1971).

The writer's search of the literature authenticated and verified the problem stated in this practicum. Pre-service teachers who have experienced past feelings of frustration with writing tasks now have difficulty cultivating writing in their primary grade elementary and special education field classrooms. It was the writer's contention that teacher candidates must learn to be able to be appropriate role models for the children in their present and future classrooms.

The literature substantiated the need for reflection, so that prospective teachers could appreciate the importance of providing abundant opportunity for writing and motivating children to be participants in a writing environment. Key elements of these opportunities must include a chance for children to choose their own topics and share with peers. In addition, this writing atmosphere must include the time necessary to understand that writing varies from child to child, and will depend on the children's involvement with their choice of topic. Merenda (1989), a teacher and researcher of writing as a process, seemed to represent the essence of this practicum by recounting, "As I watched her grow and change as a writer, my appreciation of writing as a rich and mutually rewarding step-by-step process grew... and changed as well" (p. 219).

Writing can be a powerful tool for learning, but can only flourish when teachers encourage children to write freely, fluently and well.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The students in the primary grade reading methods courses and special education student teaching seminars will be empowered to improve their attitudes toward writing, and ultimately be able to motivate the children in their field placements to think of themselves as writers. The writer anticipated that by implementing a variety of holistic writing strategies in their field classrooms, teacher candidates would be more able to fully understand the writing process and become positive role models. In turn, teaching environments will evolve in which young children feel confident to develop their writing. These goals will further enable students to adapt their instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of beginning writers.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the implementation period, this writer expected to achieve specific outcomes. The results of a college-wide survey indicated that 15 of the 17 departments represented agreed that students' written communication skills were in need

of improvement. At the completion of this practicum, journal entries will demonstrate that all teacher candidates have improved their written communication skills and will be able to comment and question their strategies for teaching writing. These improved skills will further indicate expanded beliefs about teaching and learning, which will ultimately affect classroom practice. Mills and Clyde (1991), firmly believed that "as children do, teachers reflect the context in which they operate" (p.58). Whole language can powerfully affect our pre-service teachers by enabling them to consider writing a limitless potential for all children. Concerns about students' obvious negative, if not apathetic attitude toward writing is the "foundation for expansion" (Dorotik & Bertzold, 1992, p. 578) in cultivating writing in the primary grades.

Grades in Child Study courses reflected students' inability to communicate both verbally and through written expression. As a result of following the Department Policy Guidelines for grading students in writing, only 13 of 104 students received as A or A- as a final grade during the 1991-1992 academic year. This related to the obvious uneasiness with which students approached their verbal and written assignments. By the end of the practicum implementation, in-class oral presentations and a Handbook Entry Form (Appendix E), will indicate that at least 2/3 of the

students will improve both their verbal and written expressive skills, thereby resulting in a positive increase in grades.

College supervisor observations and cooperating teacher conferences/evaluations indicated that of the 43 students observed in the writer's reading methods classes, 30 students relied heavily on ditto writing work, rather than on writing workshop activities. At the completion of implementation, college supervisor observations/conferences and Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms (Appendix D) will indicate that students in both primary reading methods courses and special education student teaching seminar are spending at least 25% more time on writing activities in which children choose their own topics, and spending 25% less time using dittoes and penmanship exercises.

A Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers (Appendix A), indicated that of the 87 students surveyed, 79 did not know what was meant by the writing process, 80 students were unfamiliar with journal writing, and 76 did not understand how the concept of authorship related to children. By the end of the implementation period, A Revised Student Survey (Appendix B), will indicate that all students will know what is meant by the writing process, and are familiar with journal writing. Furthermore, at least 2/3 of the students will understand how the concept of authorship relates to children.

The Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers also indicated that 65 of the 87 students did not know what was meant by 'instructional adaptations' in terms of fostering writing into their classrooms. At the completion of this practicum, all students will be more aware of the importance of instructional adaptations and include a 'special needs' section in their required Lesson Plan Format (Appendix C).

Collected writing samples from 67 students indicated that only 25 students expressed positive attitudes about writing. The remaining students attributed their negative feelings toward writing to past methodologies that neglected to equate writing with a sense of enjoyment. After this practicum implementation is completed, the final outcome the writer expects to achieve is to increase the percentage of teacher education students' writing sample expressing positive attitudes about the writing process from 25 to 50. It is the hope of this writer that these outcomes will enable teacher candidates to cultivate writing in their primary classrooms and become positive role models for beginning writers.

Measurement of Outcomes

In order to support the premise of this practicum, the writer used a variety of measurement tools. The outcomes resulting from these tools enabled prospective teachers

to reflect on their beliefs about writing and become more positive towards the process of writing. The focus of this practicum was on improving pre-service teachers' attitudes toward writing, which will empower them to cultivate writing in the primary grades by developing holistic and reflective teaching strategies. The writer also anticipated that the outcomes provided by these measurement tools would ultimately increase competency in all written communication skills.

Dialogue journals were used as a measurement tool to not only enable students to inquire, but to write without risk of failure in content, vocabulary or mechanics. Most students were reluctant to ask questions during class time for fear that their questions might be regarded as trivial. Dialogue journals enabled the writer to provide responses and feedback to students in a personal, meaningful and ongoing basis. The students, in turn, experienced the process of questioning, commenting and reflecting, while the writer was able to address and model ideas to guide their subsequent writing.

Field observations and in-class observance of oral presentations were measurement tools that helped the writer to determine whether students were forming more positive attitudes toward writing and integrating the writing process into their field classrooms. In addition, Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms provided a measure of how prospective teachers had aligned teaching strategies with whole language philosophies.

Furthermore, the field observations provided the invaluable opportunity to talk to Cooperating Teachers and clarify student goals and objectives.

Lesson Plan Formats provided an additional measurement tool which furnished information on how teacher candidates adapted their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of primary children. The development of field writing projects in the form of a Handbook Entry Form indicated the practical level of combining writing with the expansion of holistic teaching. As measurement tools, both the Handbook Entry Form and the creation of original lesson plans enabled the writer to determine whether her students had changed in attitude toward writing assignments from the beginning of implementation to the end.

The Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers was a measurement tool that the writer used to initially assist the students in developing familiarity with holistic writing activities or opportunities that could be fostered in the primary grades. The results of this survey were compared with the Revised Student Survey, a measurement tool that was distributed in class during the latter part of the implementation period. Both surveys provided pertinent information on whether students were aware of strategies that offered opportunity to enhance writing.

Writing samples collected at the beginning of this

practicum implementation were compared to writing samples collected at the completion of implementation through an open-ended typed of measurement tool entitled, Questionnaire About Writing (Appendix F). Results of the Questionnaire determined whether students have developed more positive attitudes toward writing and whether this attitude transcends into future classrooms.

The Special Education Student Teacher Survey (Appendix G) and the Completion Questionnaire For Special Education Student Teachers (Appendix H) were especially valuable measurement tools. Not only did they provide an opportunity to include students who would ultimately be teaching primary children with special needs, but as special education student teachers, these students had already completed methods courses in reading and elementary student teaching. Therefore, the writer was intrigued by the prospect of 'following up' on incorporating strategies that supported writing, and more importantly, enhanced writing for special needs children. It is this writer's opinion that flexibility and ability to adapt one's teaching strategies to the needs of individual children is a "must," if prospective teachers are to meet the demands of today's diverse classrooms.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem emphasized in this practicum focused on teacher candidates who were preparing to teach primary grade children to write, but did not know how to get started. Furthermore, they did not equate written expression with enjoyable, worthwhile endeavors. Preservice teachers who have experienced considerable frustration with past writing tasks have difficulty cultivating writing in their fieldwork classrooms. Despite the fact that writing was emphasized in all Child Study courses, it had negligible impact on students' perceptions of the writing process or the importance of written communication skills. It was the writer's contention that a positive 'mind-set' and an openness to new ideas could enable prospective teachers to design developmentally appropriate holistic programs in writing which could facilitate the acquisition of more than the necessary writing abilities in the primary grades.

Several possible solutions were indicated through the literature. "An apparently necessary condition for most students to adopt a deep approach to learning, is that they per-

ceive the relevance of the subject to their lives" (Brent & Felder, 1992, p. 44). Therefore, teacher candidates need opportunities to reflect on new materials. In an effort to promote and support changes in attitudes towards writing which ultimately affect teaching practices, writing assignments were used as effective vehicles for providing such opportunity. Valeri-Gold and Olson (1992), encouraged the use of response or dialogue journals in all teacher education programs, as it affords novice teachers the opportunity to write while reflecting on their own experiences. Writing while reflecting assists teacher candidates to bridge the gap between course content and classroom practice.

Dialogue journals encouraged prospective teachers to share problems or exchange ideas, while developing a sense of audience. This, in turn, fostered the integration of reading and writing. Short and Burke (1989), proposed that learning environments which encourage reflection "support all learners as inquirers" (p.193). The dialogue journal afforded the pre-service teacher opportunities to write in a nonthreatening, purposeful manner. Although holistic perspectives on writing and learning affect what is taught in teacher education programs, it is only beginning to influence how that content is taught and how it can be carried into fieldwork.

In an effort to connect course content to classroom practice, Klein (1989), suggested that teachers attempt to focus on meaningful instruction, using a writing process model or writing workshop type activities to develop fluency in both reading and writing in the primary grades. When teachers move in the direction of a whole language approach, they provide opportunity for children to write every day and share their work with others. Dyson (1990), described how prospective teachers can allow children many opportunities to freely learn about writing through play corners, blank sheets of paper, crayons or markers, not dittoes and worksheets. Writing in the primary grades should be viewed as within the context of children's social lives. Only then can prospective teachers integrate the concept of children as authors.

Shanklin and Rhodes (1989), generated other solution strategies by suggesting that beginning teachers reflect on attitudes and teaching practices through creating and sharing teacher-made materials. Using teacher-made materials enabled teacher candidates to better understand whole language as a teaching philosophy by incorporating authentic, original materials. Of course, giving students opportunity to actually use their teacher-made materials in their field classrooms often related to the school-based teacher educator, who was responsible for the pre-service teacher's continued education

in the field. Bartunek (1989), aptly stated that classroom teachers, otherwise known as cooperating teachers, can be excellent school-based teacher role models for prospective teachers if they are open and familiar with adult learning and development.

This writer had always supported the notion that improved college-field relations through increased communication between cooperating teachers and college faculty was essential, if teacher candidates were to make changes in future classroom practice. Goodman (1992), felt that "the classroom is not preparation for life; it is life itself" (p. 192). Teacher candidates needed the chance to redefine their thinking about how they intended to teach. Many of these students had concerns and questions which needed opportunity to merge with school curriculum. Instead of using something "synthethic and generalized, we use real-life, on-the-job stimuli" (Barbour, 1992), p. 196), so that novice teachers are encouraged to be original with their writing methodologies.

In reviewing the literature for possible solution strategies, the writer became interested in the research which focused on the portfolio concept. In order to explore a variety of writing strategies and evaluate holistic perspectives on writing, it had been found that portfolios offered the teacher candidate "an opportunity to learn about learning" (Paulson,

Paulson & Meyer, 1991, p. 61). By collecting examples of lessons taught and samples of writing activities initiated, prospective teachers can reflect on their instructional approaches and instructors can assess progress made in cultivating writing in field classes. According to Tierney (1992), portfolios "help you track and evaluate students' performance over time, pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses... and assess their attitudes" (p. 62).

If the solution to this practicum was to be solved, it was clearly apparent from the literature that primary reading methods students and special education student teachers must be engaged actively in their learning. The traditional format of pre-service classes had tended to consist of lecture format and independent reading of course texts. After accumulating various solution strategies from the literature, it was obvious that writing enhanced thinking. Reflection and the opportunity to experiment with authentic materials in both coursework and fieldwork enables students to incorporate a more holistic perspective on writing. Holistic writing activities are as varied as the teachers who implement them. It was the writer's hope that this variety would not only incorporate writing workshop activities, but would foster positive, enthusiastic writing innovation in the primary grades. It was time to pursue changes in college and fieldwork classrooms, for without these changes, beginning writers can never appreciate the potential that writing holds in store for them.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer was prepared to try several solutions. As was suggested by the literature, self-reflection provided the teacher candidate with a useful framework from which to question and to examine decision making. Students experienced the concept of reflection through the use of a dialogue journal which was used throughout the course. The dialogue journal was used weekly at the beginning of each class. Students were permitted choice of content, with reassurance that no grade be connected to entries, nor corrections made. All entries were read and responded to by the instructor. In this way, effort was made to promote changes in attitude towards writing through a risk-free, open-ended writing environment, which initiated changes in beliefs and classroom practice.

In addition to using the dialogue journal as a bridge to reflective teaching and learning, students prepared portfolios of all lessons taught, both independently and in cooperation with field teachers. Students also included a long-range writing project which they initiated and developed during their participation in primary grade fieldwork. Observations, concerns, comments and monitoring of the entire progress of writing projects were included in a 'running log' format. Ultimately, students participated in compiling

and publishing their writing projects as an entry into a Department Handbook of 'writing ideas' that will be used by future teacher candidates.

In order to better understand the holistic philosophy of incorporating authentic materials into teaching, students prepared an original teacher-made writing material. The writer agreed with the literature on the benefits of teacher-made materials. She encouraged students to gear this material to the needs of the children in their respective field classrooms. All teacher candidates had freedom of choice in creating either an original board game, puzzle, flannel board, big book, etc. All teacher-made writing materials were presented in class through the use of cooperative grouping and through a lesson plan which incorporated its use in the field. The shared or cooperative learning format furthered understanding of how to be both a participant and a contributor to learning. The writer hoped to promote more positive attitudes towards one's ability to be imaginative and creative when cultivating writing in the primary grades.

Included in the writer's solution strategies were observations in the field with follow-up conferences between the cooperating teacher, the student and other participating faculty. Providing opportunities for feedback from cooperating teachers and participating faculty enabled students to become comfortable and successful role models. It was essential that

all teacher candidates understood the importance of experimentation and risk-taking in the process of learning to write. It was only from such understanding that pre-service teachers were able to cultivate writing in the primary classroom.

These solutions were accomplished because of several factors. The writer was most anxious to improve students' attitudes and abilities in written expression and strived to serve as a role model for her students. In an effort to motivate students to teach and to use writing in the primary grades, many holistic strategies were implemented during coursework, to serve as a catalyst for active participation and confidence in the field. Furthermore, the writer advised students of her availability in offering extra help or needed guidance.

To promote the success of this practicum, the writer worked closely with other participating instructors to ensure that all solutions were carried out appropriately. She encouraged all participating faculty to keep in close contact with cooperating teachers in the field to collaborate on students' progress. Finally, this writer was confident that these solutions would succeed, as she had the added support of her Chairperson who acknowledged her role as an activator to strengthen the impact of written expression in both course work and field work.

Report of Action Taken

The writer began implementation on December 1st, 1992. Four out of the five sections of the primary reading methods courses and all three special education student teacher seminars participated in Practicum II. Collaboration with involved faculty was critical in order to define assignments and course requirements. Furthermore, since this was the first time in the department that instructors "teamed" for several sections of a course, faculty course outlines had to be reviewed and rewritten. Sharing professional knowledge and experience with her colleagues challenged this writer to take a leadership role and recognize the value of mutual recognition in cooperative efforts.

With permission from the department Chairperson, Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms and Lesson Plan Formats were altered somewhat, in order to include semester objectives. The writer's Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers, as well as her Revised Student Survey was finalized and distributed to participating reading methods faculty. Much discussion ensued over formalizing the Handbook Entry Form and clarifying goals and objectives for the students' writing projects. Finally, the Questionnaire About Writing was prepared for distribution at the end of implementation.

Since this writer also taught one of the three sections of

the senior special education student teacher seminars, she originally planned on including only her section during the implementation, as a comparison/carry-over for her junior level courses. She often shared her enthusiasm about her practicum with her colleagues who taught the other sections of this course. Unexpectedly, they expressed an interest in becoming part of the writer's Practicum II. As seniors, these students had already completed their reading methods courses. With the obvious encouragement and curiosity of her fellow co-workers, the writer decided to include the three seminars in her implementation. It was determined that no particular adjustments had to be made in course outlines for these courses, for it was decided that the student teachers would only be included as part of the observation procedure. In addition, the Special Education Student Teacher Survey (Appendix G), and the Completion Questionnaire For Special Education Student Teachers (Appendix H) were developed so that the writer had substantial comparison data with the junior level students. Both of these forms enabled the writer to evaluate "how much" or "if" students continued to incorporate writing for primary grade children, especially for special needs children, at the senior level.

During the first week of classes for the Spring semester, course syllabi were distributed to the 60 students in the participating sections of the primary reading methods courses. Of the 60 students, 37 were majoring in Elementary Education and 23 were

Dual Certification majors. The writer reviewed the course syllabus completely, so that all participating faculty/instructors were familiar with goals and expectations. She presented the course material to her students as something of potential value, and challenged the students to broaden their traditional ideas of what is involved in being a teacher who can be more attuned to the thinking of children as writers.

In order to think about how children can develop into writers, it was necessary to come to an understanding of writing itself. Therefore, all reading methods faculty participating in implementation, distributed the Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers, which included opportunity to collect writing samples. These samples required reflection on such questions as, "Do you like to write?" "Have you ever written for enjoyment or do you write only when required?" "Do you remember how you were taught to write?" "Do you think writing will be an integral part of your classroom? If so, explain how; if not, why not?" (see Appendix A).

During the second week of the semester, the students were introduced to the concept of reflection through the use of dialogue journals. Small blue booklets served as individual journals. Students were directed to 'personalize' the covers of their journals and to write "Journal #1" on it. Topic choices were self-chosen and students were informed that errors in spell-

ing, punctuation and grammar would not be corrected. Journals were distributed at the beginning of every class and collected each week so that the writer and her colleagues could provide on-going feedback.

By the third week into the semester, after collaborating with the other two special education supervisors, the writer visited the senior seminars as a guest speaker, to engage the students in an open discussion about whether the reading/writing connection could be applied to their special education field classrooms, in terms of adapting instruction. The writer then distributed the Special Education Student Teacher Survey to the 30 students who comprised the three sections. Participating faculty later collected the completed surveys and returned the data to this writer.

By the end of the third month of implementation, all students in the participating primary reading methods courses had been placed in field classes. It was interesting to note that the special education senior student teachers had been placed immediately and were actively participating in their classrooms from the first week of the semester. Lesson plan workshops took place in each reading section through the use of cooperative grouping and Lesson Plan Formats were distributed. Students were required to base at least one lesson plan on children's literature and one lesson plan would incorporate their teacher-made material. Participating faculty introduced a var-

iety of holistic writing strategies which included the writing process itself, and the introduction of dictated stories, language experience stories, a multitude of journal-type writing and portfolio assessment.

During the fourth month, all participating faculty had begun field observations, and continued this procedure throughout the semester. In addition to telephone communication, faculty personally conferenced with cooperating teachers and received the Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms, which assisted in monitoring students' progress.

Another unanticipated event occurred when one of the adjunct reading methods instructors could not seem to clarify the requirements of the writing project and Handbook Entry Form and approached this writer for additional help. It appeared the students were reluctant and unsure of how to proceed. Yet, the instructor of the course was determined to continue. To the writer's delight, the course instructor agreed to have the writer connect with her students to alleviate some of the 'tension.' The writer then rearranged her schedule so that she could meet with this group of students during their own class time. Small cooperative grouping provided opportunity for the students to brainstorm ideas and work out their problems. A great many questions were answered and many more were brought to light. The writer distributed additional Handbook Entry Forms and was pleased that the course instructor later indicated that she felt

more comfortable and her students were progressing nicely.

During the latter part of the semester, students presented their teacher-made materials in class and shared their materials through cooperative grouping. The writer made note of observed attitudes about using these materials in the classroom, and compared data with participating faculty. Students completed their portfolios, with prospective entries for the Department 'handbook.' All entries were collected from participating sections and given to this writer. Finally, the Revised Student Survey was distributed.

In order to continue implementation procedures, the writer distributed the Questionnaire About Writing to all participating reading methods students, and the Completion Questionnaire For Special Education Student Teachers during the fifth and sixth month of implementation. These reflective inquiry tools enabled the writer to further assess changing beliefs about writing in the primary classroom. All data was collected by the seventh month of implementation and participating faculty proved to be most cooperative. The writer continued to organize her material in a logical, meaningful manner and selected entries for the Department handbook were reviewed.

During the last two months of implementation, the writer arranged for printing and publishing of the 'Student Handbook.' A title was selected and after consultation with the Chairperson, preparations were made for possible distribution at the start of

the following Spring or Fall semester. The writer continued to share results of implementation with participating faculty, so that her final report would be clearly and professionally presented.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Throughout the development and procedure of this major practicum, the writer has immersed herself, as well as her students and participating faculty in a repertoire of activities that encourage young children to write. Her focus was to ameliorate the problem that pre-service teachers had in cultivating writing in their primary grade fieldwork classrooms. Despite the fact that writing was stressed in every Child Study course, students remained unmotivated and unable to link writing to the very nature of learning, communication and language. For teacher candidates who had often experienced considerable frustration with past writing tasks, the ultimate goal of solving this practicum problem was an obvious challenge.

The writer's first objective was to improve the written communication skills of all teacher candidates, thereby enabling them to comment, question and reflect on strategies that enhance writing. This objective was achieved. The use of dialogue journals served as a catalyst to obtain these results. It should be noted that the writer was quite surprised to find that for many students, dialogue journal writing was a new experience. The concensus was that such writing

made the class more personal and comfortable, in that students were empowered to reflect and share thoughts and ideas with an instructor.

> With the use of these journals, I was able to express my anxieties, annoyances, and reflect on positive experiences. I appreciated being permitted to write about whatever I chose, and receiving a prompt reply was extremely helpful (Jennifer, May, 1993).

> I was able to get out feelings that were bottling up inside of me. I was also able to write good things down that I would have wanted to share with others. It made me feel that someone was listening to me and cared for what I had to say. I will definitely do this with my own students (Sandra, May, 1993).

> I have also been able to monitor my growth. I have seen that the questions I used to ask are much different from my questions today (Theresa, May, 1993).

In addition to insuring that all students be provided a means to improve their writing communication skills through the use of dialogue journal writing, the writer was able to clearly draw from the responses to the Questionnaire About Writing (Appendix F), distributed at the completion of the semester, that attitudes about writing had changed since the beginning of the semester. The results of the Questionnaire About Writing indicated that 59 of the 60 students felt that the weekly dialogue journals gave them more confidence to express comments, ask questions, and reflect on writing strategies.

> I can see that writing is as important as reading. I used to think it was just to occasionally be used. I now think writing activities should be done every day, throughout the day (Jeanne, May, 1993).

> Yes, BIG time! Now I realize that alot depends on how the teacher 'goes about' teaching. If it is fun for the children, they will obviously enjoy it and want to write more (Peter, May, 1993).
>
> I know my attitudes have changed. I am more aware of versatility and importance that writing has in the lives of children (William, May, 1993).
>
> I never expected children in first grade to have so many capabilities with writing. Continuous and varying opportunities to write seems to be the key (Nancy, May, 1993).

Using a dialogue journal format to improve written communication skills proved to be successful for teacher candidates. The fact that students were able to receive constructive feedback and also exercise control over their writing very definitely substantiated the quite positive and 'upbeat' attitudes that resulted.

The writer's second objective was that at least 2/3 of the teacher candidates will improve both their verbal and their written expressive skills through in-class oral presentations, teacher-made materials and portfolios containing lesson plans and the written development of a semester writing project, thereby resulting in a positive increase in grades. This objective was achieved. Portfolios of collected lesson plans indicated that lessons were better organized and well-written, with clearly defined behavioral objectives. Also included were on-going logs describing the development of the semester writing project and the Handbook Entry Form (Appendix E), which demonstrated improved written communication skills. Furthermore,

results of oral presentations indicated that more than 2/3 of the students wanted to share, demonstrating improved verbal communication skills, as compared to observed oral presentations at the beginning of the semester.

Oral presentations, in the form of sharing teacher-made materials, were extremely motivating for all students. The writer noted that by first grouping the students doing the same grade fieldwork together, they were more confident to interact. This seemed to increase excitement for later sharing with the class as a whole. The writer also wishes to inform the reader that choice was given as to how the groups were to be formed. She had originally planned on heterogeneous groups of K-3 levels. However, students preferred building on specific knowledge within the grade level which they had been placed.

After grouping the students as such, they were prompted to share with their small group and then "invited" to share materials with the group at large. It was interesting for this writer to observe and listen to students who savored the positive effects of acceptance and support from peers. All 'kindergarteners' were able to offer valuable comments and constructive criticism to one another, as were the groups of 'first, second and third graders.' The results of the various small groupings were amazing, for this 'dry run' gave impetus to a majority of students to then share with the entire class.

A self-selected 'writer' from each small group was then

directed to the board to share a cooperatively-created list of writing ideas to the group at large. In summary, improvement in both verbal and written expressive skills was demonstrated for at least 2/3 of the teacher candidates.

In addition to the attainment of this second objective, the writer was delighted to be able to develop and prepare a handbook for the Department entitled, Writing in K-3: A Handbook of Ideas For Pre-Service Teachers. This handbook, which the writer considers to be a supplement to her practicum, was created through the efforts of the primary reading methods students and involved faculty who participated in the practicum. The prospect of being part of actually writing a handbook validated the fact that the essence of authorship can apply to any level, whether primary grade or college.

Although many of the students were initially reluctant, or let us say, overwhelmed by the prospect of working on some form of on-going writing venture in their field classes, the writer was more than pleased with the results. Students continued to come up with additional ideas as they followed the writer after the semester was completed and even during Summer Session. In fact, the writer found herself beseiged by zealous students to find out if "there was still time" to present another entry for the handbook.

Reflections written on Handbook Entry Forms crystallized the very purpose of this writer's second objective:

> I started a 'Book About Me' and found it very rewarding. The children really enjoyed it. I always thought that for children to learn about writing, they had to be drilled. They gained alot of pleasure from this activity, and yet they also learned to write more effectively (Jen, April, 1993).
>
> My semester writing project was weekly story writing. Even if the children cannot spell, I found that invented spelling is just as beneficial as conventional spelling (Kathy, April, 1993).
>
> My semester writing project involved using dialogue journals. It was not only a learning experience, but it was also successful. My first graders loved it and I did too! It is effective and can be easily modified for any classroom situation (Bill, April, 1993).

Upon comparing grades with her enthusiastic colleagues, it was apparent to the writer that improvement was demonstrated and that at least 2/3 of the students enhanced their verbal and written expressive skills.

The writer's third objective was that college supervisor observations and Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms (Appendix D), indicate that students in both primary reading methods courses and special education student teaching seminars spend 25% more time on writing activities in which children choose their own topics, and spend 25% less time using dittoes and penmanship exercises. This objective was achieved.

According to the Cooperating Teacher Evaluation Forms and college supervisor observations, all junior reading methods students placed in public school districts were able to spend 25% or more time on writing activities that included self-choice. On the whole, Cooperating Teachers commented and approved

of encouraging students to incorporate writing into their own teaching style. However, the majority of private or religiously-oriented 'placements were traditional in their perspectives on writing. Approximately 1/4 of the students complained that they had difficulty obtaining valuable 'teaching time.' Although some placements were not as positive as others, all students were able to use their teacher-made materials, as well as develop their on-going semester writing project. Thus, the writer's third objective was obtained.

It should be noted that since the writer's background experience is in special education, as well as early literacy, and her doctoral specialization is in Special Services/Exceptional Children (SPEC), she was particularly drawn to the seniors who participated in her practicum and who were student teaching in special education self-contained, mainstreamed or 'included' field placements.

Since all of the 30 student teachers had completed their reading methods courses, the writer was more than curious to discern any 'carry-over' from these courses. Three seminar supervisors, including this writer, observed the 30 special education student teachers for a minimum of two to three times during implementation. It was clearly demonstrated that the writer's third objective was more than achieved with this group, as students gradually, then totally 'took over' as 'teacher.' Cooperating Teacher Evaluations scored all 30 stu-

dents in the average to superior range, with at least 2/3 of the students in the above-average to superior range.

Furthermore, to the delight of the writer, the results of the Special Education Student Teacher Survey (Appendix G), also indicated unanimous agreement that the reading methods courses had, indeed, 'carried over' to their field classrooms. Of the 30 students surveyed, all agreed that the reading/writing connection can and should be applied to the special education environment. In terms of adapting instruction, the students were not only aware of the beauty of invented spelling, but they offered suggestions involving peer tutoring, use of thick chalk, pencils or crayons, pencil holders, dictated story strategies, tape recorders, as well as using "technology" to enable a child to communicate her ideas.

> To say that a reading/writing connection is not applicable to special education children would be like closing a door (Moriah, February, 1993).
>
> Carpe Diem! Take every moment, any place and use it - model, prompt, provide examples for communication. I think the Buddy Journal lends itself to cooperative learning and facilitates appropriate social behavior and interaction (Melissa, February, 1993).
>
> Even a dictated journal can be valuable for the child who can't write it down physically (Tammy, February, 1993).

The preferred type of journal in the special education environment was a dialogue format. All 30 student teachers agreed that this type of journal is a useful tool to pro-

mote trust between teacher and child..."encouraged not discouraged with multiple corrections" (Vita, February, 1993).

> Anything can be applied to special ed., but a different approach may be necessary. Anything that can be done for regular ed. can be adapted for special ed. (Susan, February, 1993).

As the reader is aware, the 30 special education student teachers were originally to be included in the implementation of this practicum in relation to supervisor observations and Cooperating Teacher evaluations. However, due to the writer's insatiable curiosity, she not only distributed the Special Education Student Teacher Survey, but also the Completion Questionnaire For Special Education Student Teachers (Appendix H), at the completion of the semester. In this way, the writer felt she could satisfy her personal quest to determine if the reading methods courses influenced teaching philosophies about writing at the senior-level.

Interestingly enough, this Questionnaire was very definitely connected to the writer's third objective. Results indicated that 29 of the 30 student teachers felt that their reading methods courses had enabled them to be more holistic with regard to writing.

> Before my reading courses, I only thought of the physical act of writing (Lisa, June, 1993).

> As a result of taking my reading courses, I am so much more aware of how writing takes place everywhere. They're never too young or too dis-

> abled to learn that print carries a message (Valerie, June, 1993).
>
> I believe that my reading methods classes strongly influenced my philosophies about writing. I have developed a clearer understanding and appreciation for the writing process and whole language in general (Keri, June, 1993).

Although the inclusion of these 30 students was totally unexpected, the writer was especially pleased with her results.

The writer's fourth objective was that all reading methods students will know what is meant by the writing process and become familiar with journal writing. Also, at least 2/3 of the students will understand how the concept of authorship relates to children. This objective was not fully achieved, but a comparison of the Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers (Appendix A) and the Revised Student Survey (Appendix B), indicated an undeniable attainment in all areas. Out of 60 students, 51 students were familiar with Buddy Journals, and 56 out of 60 students were familiar with Dialogue Journals. However, only 34 out of 60 were fully cognizant of all phases of the writing process, and 39 out of 60 students fully understood how the concept of authorship relates to children. A complete comparison of survey results, both before and after implementation has been included in Figure 1 (p.69). Therefore, although the writer's fourth objective was not completely achieved, results were positive.

RESULTS OF STUDENT SURVEY FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS
A Comparison of Before and After Implementation

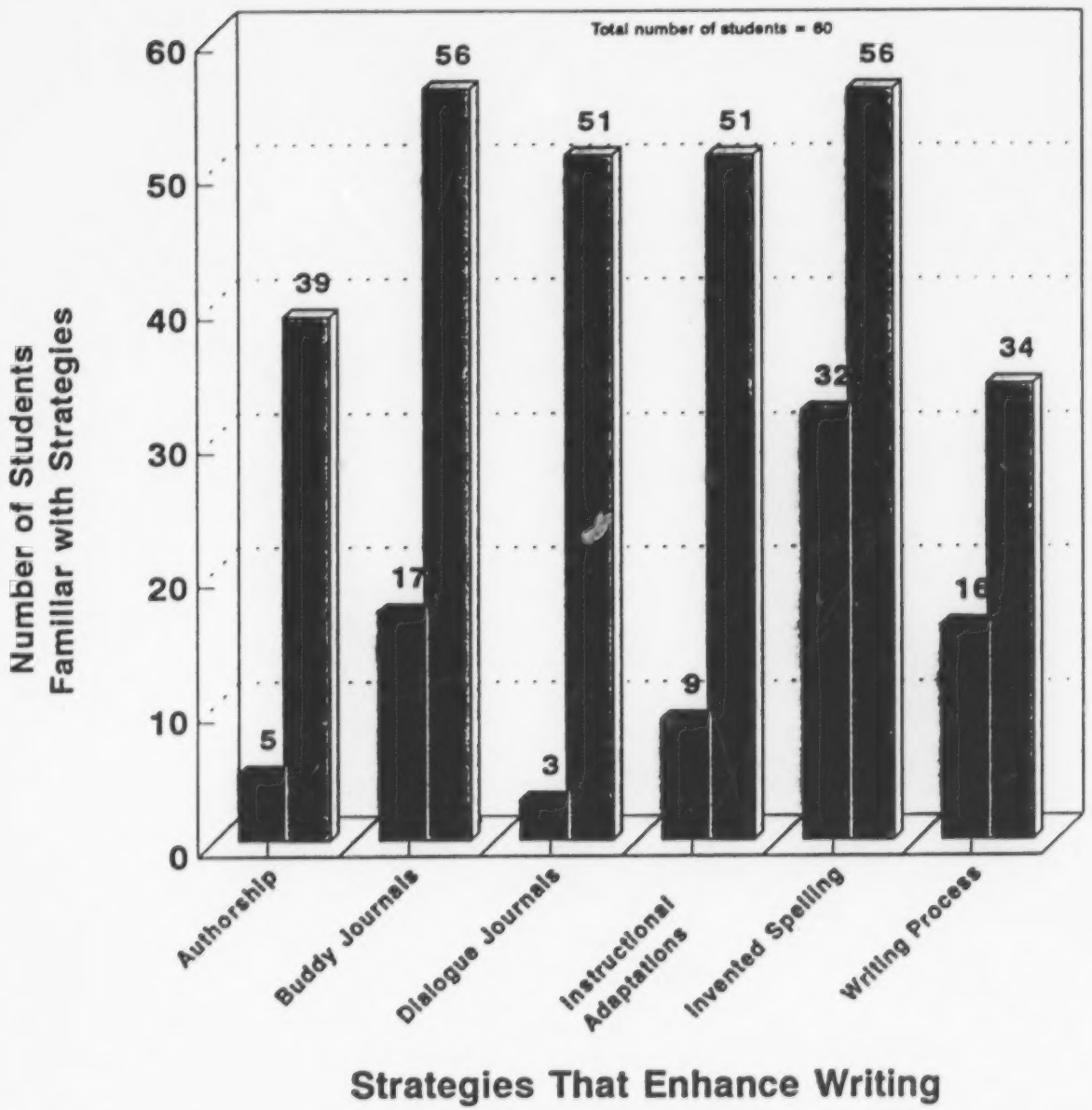

Figure 1

A fifth objective was that students become more aware of the importance of instructional adaptations and include a 'special needs' section in their required Lesson Plan Format (Appendix C). This objective was achieved. Results of completed Lesson Plan Formats demonstrated that all students included a special needs section with appropriate attempts to adapt instruction when needed. In addition, all students completed the section entitled, "Adaptations For The Exceptional Child" on the Handbook Entry Form (Appendix E).

The reader might remember that at the start of implementation, 37 of the 60 reading methods students were majoring in elementary education and 23 were dual certification majors. Curiously enough, by the end of implementation, only 26 students remained elementary majors and 34 were dual certification majors. The writer would like to think that these changes are directly related to her fifth objective. According to Thaler (1993), "teachers need to learn how to adapt a regular early childhood literacy program to include children with special needs" (p. 319). Diversity makes teaching both exciting and fascinating, and meeting the needs of all children is what teaching is all about.

The writer's sixth and last objective was to increase the percentage of pre-service teachers' writing samples expressing positive attitudes about the writing process by 25.

This objective was achieved. Although the results of the Student Survey For Pre-Service Teachers indicated that only 16 of 60 students were familiar with the writing process and the Revised Student Survey indicated an increase in familiarity from 16 to 34, the Questionnaire About Writing (Appendix F), demonstrated that all students expressed positive attitudes toward the writing process. One student seemed to 'sum up' the reactions of her peers:

> I think the writing process is valuable because it sets a framework which never outlives its usefulness. If such great emphasis was placed on writing when we were younger, fewer college students would have difficulty writing and would not fear it (Sally, May, 1993).

Discussion

The results of Practicum II have more than delighted this writer. The most powerful implication drawn from this experience is that teacher candidates can broaden their philosophies about writing, the writing process and cultivating writing in the primary grades, when they are empowered to view writing as a whole, rather than a collection of small pieces. After presenting the results of this practicum, the writer feels that the underlying impetus for her objectives related to her attempts to make changes where it counts,,, in the classroom.

When pre-service teachers do not feel comfortable as

writers,they are less inclined to be flexible with various writing approaches. Teachers can become more confident writers in very much the same way that children learn. According to Hampton (1993), "with the advent of the process writing approach, it's clear that textbooks and teachers are not the sole facilitators of learning" (p.6). Journal writing can provide unique opportunity to record events and thoughts that can stimulate ideas and offer time to reflect on those ideas.

Walley (1991), states that journal type writing "honors a child's right to write" (p. 153). Using journals takes time, but assists prospective teachers in becoming better thinkers. In the college classroom, journal writing serves to integrate course content with practical experiences in teaching. For the primary classroom, journals allow children "to be totally in charge of their writing" (Bakst & Essa, 1990, p. 150), learning more than traditional memorization of letters and conventional spelling.

Teachers make hundreds of decisions each day, from very trivial to very complex. Pre-service teachers must become aware that these decisions can have far-reaching implications. The writer believes that these implications can best be drawn from when pre-service teachers learn to assess their own progress as learners. Portfolios of lesson plans, including on-going descriptions of semester writing projects helped teacher

candidates gain insight into their accomplishments in teaching. According to Wolf (1989), the use of portfolios engages students in constructing a story - a long-term account - of what and how they learn" (p. 38).

It is the hope of this writer that teacher candidates encourage portfolio usage as a valuable asset in their own classrooms, for early on, children can become aware of the importance of ownership and pride in one's writing. In addition, self-assessment can be particularly beneficial to the special needs child. It affords these reluctant writers a chance to reflect on their own learning and track their own progress. Furthermore, along with an essential growth in confidence, Frazier and Paulson (1992), feel that children will be "free to use their portfolios to understand themselves as writers" (p. 64).

According to the literature in the field, there is greater likelihood of students implementing holistic writing strategies in their classrooms, if they have had prior experience with them in their own learning. Thus, the writer agrees with Kelly and Farnan (1990), who state that "teacher educators should themselves model instructional approaches they expect their students to use in student teaching and beyond" (p. 264). Throughout the year, the writer strived to encourage prospective teachers to use a wide variety of writing, including journals and semester-long projects. The

writer is pleased that the student handbook, entitled, Writing in K-3: A Handbook For Pre-Service Teachers, not only cultivated writing in field placements, but nurtured an excitement for students in sharing themselves as writers. This sense of authorship is the very essence of writing process classrooms.

Making presentations and discussing activities/ideas, such as the teacher-made materials, encourages pre-service teachers to use reflective practice in teaching. Wellington (1991), feels that "reflective practice, like a tenacious wildflower in the city, vibrates with vitality, raising our awareness and calling us from passivity to action" (p. 4). Oral presentations can challenge students to expand on their feelings about why they choose to create particular teacher-made materials and actually verify their thinking by giving examples or referring to other situations.

In addition to stimulating the primary reading methods students to cultivate writing in their field placements, the writer is especially pleased with the outcomes of including the senior special education student teachers in her practicum. Not only did results indicate 'carry-over' from junior to senior level courses, but students were able to vividly demonstrate their growing professionalism and ability to adapt instruction when necessary. Giving children with disabilities time to write is often not enough. Most times, these children need to first

develop a level of trust and comfort to be built on. By viewing writing as a process, special needs children can learn to develop and organize ideas around their topics. Diller and Smith (1991), agree that "teachers will feel rewarded as they see their adapted teaching approaches making a profound difference in their students lives" (p.15). Engaging children in the writing process can also provide the needed outlet for working out emotional or social crises for these at-risk young writers.

Overall, the writer feels that the challenge of motivating pre-service teachers to cultivate writing in the primary grades by developing holistic and reflective teaching strategies was actually productive and gratifying. The fact that the writer initiated collaboration of course expectations with participating faculty fostered the discovery of the beauty of cooperative efforts. Friedman and Koeppel (1990), aptly state that by sharing ideas we often discover "some common threads and goals" (p. 66).

Whether college or primary level, writing gives one a sense of power. More than ten years ago, Marjorie Frank (1979) wrote, "Freedom and time to write alone are the fertile soil. But teachers can offer a great deal more to nourish the growth of competent autonomous writers" (p. 192). The writer agrees and believes that changes in how writing is presented in today's classrooms can only be achieved by the active efforts of tea-

chers who believe in the worth and enchantment that writing can offer to primary children. Thaler (1993), seems to encompass the potential of childhood when he states that "All children are citizens of the most powerful nation in the world: IMAGI-NATION" (p. 319).

Recommendations

The writer proposes two recommendations that could contribute to the success of empowering pre-service teachers to cultivate writing in the primary grades: (1) in order for teacher candidates to equate writing with worthwhile, pleasurable and stimulating activities, they must first feel the excitement and challenge of experiencing these activities themselves, thereby becoming active participants in their own learning; (2) students must be afforded opportunity to incorporate holistic writing activities in the field, interact with primary children, and then reflect on their efforts in order to further broaden their philosophies about writing.

The writer has endeavored to link writing with the very nature of learning and teaching. She will continue to challenge her students to recognize the beauty of a writing process classroom, where children can be enabled to choose their own topics and develop a sense of authorship, gaining new views of themselves as writers.

Pre-service teachers who are initially unmotivated due to their own past experiences with writing, can evolve dramatically new standards if they are given the risk-free opportunity to change their concepts of what writing is all about. Young children are 'chock-full' of possibilities to grow as writers. Teacher candidates must believe that this growth can blossom if they create healthy, challenging writing climates in their field placements and ultimately in their own future classrooms.

Dissemination

The writer has specific plans for disseminating the results of her major practicum. First, she will share with her department, as a whole, during faculty meetings. These meetings are held once a week and the writer will arrange 'time slots' with her Chairperson. Second, the writer has been fortunate to be able to develop a warm, yet professional relationship with the Dean of the college, who has been most anxious to discuss results of the practicum. In fact, throughout the implementation, the Dean had often expressed interest in the dialogue journals that the writer had used with her students. Third, this writer plans to publish one or more articles pertaining to her findings. She hopes that her work will be appropriate for such journals as The Reading Teacher, Reading Horizons or Teacher Education and Special Education.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the writer plans to encourage the Department of Child Study to require usage of her handbook entitled, Writing in K-3: A Handbook of Ideas for Pre-Service Teachers, in all primary reading methods courses. The Chairperson, as well as faculty who participated in this practicum, have already expressed interest in utilizing the handbook as a 'supplement' to the course. Interestingly enough, the lead supervisor of the elementary education student teaching seminars has also discussed the possibility of having all seminar instructors utilize the ideas in their sections. Therefore, the likelihood of disseminating the handbook to primary reading methods students and students teachers in both elementary and special education seminars appears to be a veritable potentiality.

Overall, this writer is quite certain that the results of her Practicum II will be effectively disseminated. In conclusion, she would like to leave the reader with the opportunity to reflect on the words of Walter Elias Disney, whose words are inscribed at the entrance to Disneyworld: "Our Greatest Resource Is The Minds Of Our Children."

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

STUDENT SURVEY FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

I am an ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MAJOR _____

I am a DUAL CERTIFICATION MAJOR _____

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Using the back of this paper, briefly discuss the following: Do you like to write? Have you ever written for enjoyment or do you write only when required? Do you remember how you were taught to write? Do you think writing will be an integral part of your classroom? If so, explain how; if not, why not? After writing one to three paragraphs, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. What is meant by the reading/writing connection?

2. What is involved in the "Writing Process?"

3. What is Invented Spelling?

4. What is meant by Authorship?

5. What are Big Books?

6. What are Experience Charts/Dictated Stories?

7. What are Dialogue Journals?

8. What are Buddy Journals?

9. What are Reflective Journals?

10. How can children "Publish?"

11. What is meant by Picture Writing?

12. What is meant by "Instructional Adaptations?"

APPENDIX B

REVISED STUDENT SURVEY

REVISED STUDENT SURVEY

Define the following terms to the best of your ability:

1. the Writing Process

2. Invented Spelling

3. Dialogue Journal

4. Buddy Journals

5. Authorship

6. Instructional Adaptations

NAME: _____

I am an ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MAJOR ____

I am a DUAL CERTIFICATION MAJOR ____

APPENDIX C

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

NAME OF STUDENT _____ SCHOOL _____

CHILD STUDY COURSE _____ DATE OF LESSON _____

COOPERATING TEACHER _____ GRADE_____ SIZE OF GROUP ____

CURRICULUM AREA _____ TITLE OF LESSON _____

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE:

RATIONALE:

MATERIALS:

DEVELOPMENT/PROCEDURES:
(Introduction/Motivating Activity/Instructional Strategies)

CLOSURE:

INSTRUCTIONAL ADAPTATIONS:
(Exceptional Children/Special Needs)

ASSESSMENT/Short&Long Term:

SELF-REFLECTION:

APPENDIX D

COOPERATING TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT NAME _____

FIELD SCHOOL/GRADE _____ 92

COOPERATING TEACHER _____

COLLEGE COURSE _____ INSTRUCTOR _____

☐ At this time the student's performance is good and his/her attendance is regular.

☐ I have some minor concerns at this time about this student's skills or potential.

☐ I have major concerns about this student's skills and/or potential to teach. Please have a faculty member contact me by phone.

Phone # (Work) _____

(Home) _____

PLEASE INDICATE AT LEAST TWO LESSONS WHICH HAVE ENCORPORATED WRITING ACTIVITIES INTO THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM:

1.

2.

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE WRITING PROJECT THAT THIS STUDENT HAS INITIATED AND DEVELOPED THIS SEMESTER.

THE STUDENT HAS SHOWN ME HIS/HER SYLLABUS: Yes _____ No _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

_____
COOPERATING TEACHER'S SIGNATURE

APPENDIX E

HANDBOOK ENTRY FORM

HANDBOOK ENTRY FORM

WRITING PROJECT TITLE:

GRADE/AGES:

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:

MATERIALS USED:

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

ADAPTATIONS FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD:

NAME _____ COURSE _____ SECTION _____

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT WRITING

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT WRITING

Answer the following questions by relating your PERSONAL REACTIONS to each:

1. Has our weekly Dialogue Journal writing been a positive or negative experience for you? Explain.

2. Do you think you will cultivate writing in the primary grades? If so, How? If not, Why Not?

3. Have your attitudes about writing changed since the beginning of the semester?

4. What do you think of the Writing Process?

NAME _____ COURSE _____ SECTION _____

APPENDIX G

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHER SURVEY

As special education student teachers, you have already completed your methods courses in reading and your elementary education student teaching. With that in mind, please answer the following:

1. Can the reading/writing connection be applied to special education?

2. In terms of writing, what is meant by adapting instruction?

3. Can a Dialogue Journal benefit children with special needs?

4. Would you consider incorporating Buddy Journals in your special education classroom?

5. How can a Reflective Journal help you in your teaching?

6. What is meant by natural opportunities for language use?

NAME: _____ SECTION: _____

APPENDIX H

COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHERS

COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHERS

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Now that you are completing your Special Education Student Teaching, please answer the following questions relating your experiences with enhancing writing for special needs children:

1. Did you incorporate any writing strategies or techniques which you learned through your reading methods courses? Explain.

2. Briefly discuss at least 3 ways that you have particularly supported writing during your student teaching in special education. You may include individual/group work.

3. Would you say that your reading methods courses influenced your philosophies about teaching reading and writing? If so, How?

NAME: CLASS/SECTION: